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Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to resolution 1526 (2004), which was submitted to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), in accordance with paragraph (a) of the annex to resolution 2160 (2014).

I should be grateful if the report could be brought to the attention of the Council members and issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gerard **van Bohemen**
Chair
Security Council Committee established pursuant to
resolution 1988 (2011)

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Letter dated 1 June 2015 from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011)

I enclose the Monitoring Team's sixth report pursuant to the annex of resolution 2160 (2014).

I want to particularly commend the experts who have done the bulk of the work in Afghanistan on this report and earlier ones, along with the superb contribution by a United Nations staff member who supports our work on Afghanistan. Their extensive work in and around Afghanistan under conditions of significant risk continues to form the anchor on which Monitoring Team reporting, analysis and recommendations are based.

The Monitoring Team notes that the original language of the report is English. For ease of reference, the three recommendations made by the Team are in bold.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Evans**
Coordinator
Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team
established pursuant to resolution 1526 (2004)

Sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2160 (2014) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan

Summary

The present report provides an update of the situation in Afghanistan since the publication of the last report of the Monitoring Team in October 2014 (S/2014/888). The Taliban spring offensive is in full swing, with a greater level of coordination in evidence, including the participation of foreign terrorist fighters. Despite their increasing efforts, the Taliban presently remain unable to alter the military stalemate that persists on the ground.

The new Government, led by President Ghani, has filled all Cabinet positions in the security field. Afghan troops continue to execute significant military operations on their own, temporarily retaking one of the four district headquarters (Nawa in Ghazni province) that was under the control of the Taliban for a number of years.[a] However, the Taliban have also managed to temporarily overrun some district centres and hold them for up to three days. To advance peace, security and a political process in Afghanistan two essential factors remain important. The first is continued external financial support, in particular to Afghan national security and defence forces. The second is generating a high degree of confidence in Government institutions from the Afghan public.

On the political front, the Taliban leadership is increasingly divided over the question of engaging with the Government of Afghanistan. The top leadership vacillated on this during the first three months of 2015, before deciding on prioritizing a military approach, accompanied by permission for some elements to engage in contacts with non-Taliban Afghans, but not with the Government. Hardliners who earlier had formed splinter groups tend now instead to declare their loyalty to the "Khorasan province" of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (QDe.115) (listed as Al-Qaida in Iraq).

[a] The Monitoring Team had reported in its fourth report that only four district centres were outside the control of Government forces; among them was Nawa district in Ghazni province (see S/2014/402, para. 3).

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I. Evidence base

1. The Team visited Afghanistan in the run-up to the writing of the present report four times, in November 2014 and January, March and May 2015. Senior Afghan Government officials addressed the Committee on 26 February 2015 at a special session. The Team continues to receive regular official updates on the security situation. The Team also received information from Member States on the situation in Afghanistan, and visited three neighbouring States: Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the Team met with Afghan officials outside Afghanistan, in addition to its regular interactions with the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations in New York.

II. Political context

Afghan Taliban spring offensive

2. Over the winter of 2014-2015 Afghan Security Forces conducted a series of operations that targeted Taliban forces. According to Afghan Government officials, the increased presence of foreign fighters was noticeable during these operations. In several locations Afghan forces captured foreign fighters, as well as family members accompanying them. Most of the captured individuals reported that they had previously been located in North Waziristan, Pakistan, and had left because of the Pakistani military operation "Zarb-e-Azab". Most prominent among these were fighters belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (QDe.010) and the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (QDe.132). Among both groups significant numbers have started to declare their loyalty to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (QDe.115)[1] and use black flags previously associated only with Al-Qaida (QDe.004). The Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (QDe.118) was also reported to have increased its activity in the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan.

3. As a result, the insurgency has become more diverse, and includes a sizeable number of fighters from Central Asia, the Caucasus region and Pakistan. The Taliban launched attacks in multiple provinces covered by the same army corps in an effort to overextend and exhaust them.

4. The new Taliban spring offensive "Azm" ("Resolve") was announced on 24 April 2015, accompanied by almost simultaneous attacks by Taliban in 22 provinces on the same day. Major Taliban assaults took place outside their core areas in the provinces of Farah, Kunduz and Badakhshan. According to Afghan security officials, the current offensive is characterized by a significantly higher quality of strategic planning and better tactical execution by Taliban groups, with foreign fighters acting as force multipliers. In various provinces, such as Kunduz and Badakhshan, the Taliban carefully analysed local circumstances and adjusted their tactics to take full advantage of security gaps and local rivalries. This resulted in initial tactical successes, although it remains to be seen whether the Taliban will be able to sustain their gains over the summer months.

5. Under current circumstances, two alternative scenarios from the current fighting season seem possible. In a negative scenario, it is not impossible that the

[1] Listed as Al-Qaida in Iraq.

Taliban could gain control of additional districts in the north of Afghanistan, in particular in Badakhshan province.[2] Another cause for concern is the continuing and sustained fighting in several districts in Nangarhar province.[2] While these gains would not constitute a strategic reversal of the existing military stalemate in Afghanistan, sustained control of additional districts[3] would constitute a propaganda success for the insurgency and therefore a partial setback to the slow attrition of the insurgency that was observed during 2013 and 2014. In addition, it remains unclear what impact such a propaganda success could have on the willingness of the Taliban leadership to eventually engage in meaningful negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan. Since the current top leadership seem to be hesitant to engage in direct negotiations with the Government (see sect. IV), it seems likely that in this scenario the start of direct negotiations would again be postponed.

6. In a more positive scenario, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces would be able to recapture and hold currently contested districts in the north and east of the country. According to data provided to the Monitoring Team by interlocutors in the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in early 2015, the Taliban were willing to suffer significant losses in the fight for control of these districts. That would represent a clear setback for the Taliban leadership. The Taliban would emerge from the current fighting season having suffered a propaganda defeat. Such a scenario might strengthen the minority within the Taliban leadership who currently argue for starting a process of meaningful negotiations if they could point to the lack of success of the military efforts of the insurgency (see sect. IV).

7. In both scenarios, according to the assessment of senior interlocutors of the Monitoring Team within the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, sustained international support remains a crucial factor for success. Continued external financial support for the Forces will be especially critical. The Monitoring Team will continue to monitor the progress of the current fighting season and will regularly update the Committee.

III. Reconciliation

8. The new Afghan Government has made the peace process its priority. President Ashraf Ghani has prioritized engagement with Pakistan and key Gulf States in pursuit of this aim. However, the Taliban as a movement continues to be divided over the very desirability of reconciliation.

9. Some Taliban attached to the Quetta Shura[4] continue to advocate for political engagement. According to Afghan interlocutors, these individuals build their case around a number of arguments. Some point to the disastrous military situation in Kandahar and Helmand provinces and the way rival tribes and networks have been empowered as a result of the ongoing military confrontation. Others point to the

[2] Monitoring Team discussions with senior Afghan security officials in May 2015.

[3] During the last two years, the Taliban were only able to sustainably control four districts, two in the south of Afghanistan and two in the east of Afghanistan.

[4] The Quetta Shura and the Peshawar Shura represent analytical concepts, not geographic concepts. The terms refer to networks of Taliban leaders who spent time in Quetta or Peshawar as refugees. Members of the Quetta Shura consider themselves closer to the Taliban Leadership Council than members of the Haqqani Network or the Peshawar Shura.

challenge for the Taliban of breaking out from their core areas of strength in the south, with some even questioning whether military success in the south alone could bring victory. These advocates of political engagement are open to a negotiated settlement through a regional process that includes Pakistan.

10. Meanwhile, another small group of Taliban leaders propose direct talks between the movement and the Afghan Government. This strand is led by Tayyib Agha and includes individuals associated with the group currently residing in Doha.

11. According to Afghan Government officials, some of the main Taliban leaders, in particular Mullah Mohammad Abbas Akhund (TAi.066), initially reacted favourably to overtures made by the new Afghan Government through Pakistan. In January 2015 representatives of the Quetta Shura, including Mullah Gul Agha Ishakzai (TAi.147), currently heading the Taliban finance commission, also announced that they were seeking a negotiated end to the conflict.[5]

12. However, senior Afghan Government interlocutors explained that the top Taliban leadership later clarified in March 2015 that no talks would be entertained with the Afghan Government. This position was set out by Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour Shah Mohammad (TAi.011) and supported by Mullah Abdul Qayum Zaker (not listed),[6] Mullah Abdul Razaq Akhund Lala Akhund (TAi.053), Mullah Abdul Manan Nyazi (TAi.097) and the leader of the Peshawar Shura[7] Mawlawi Abdul Kabir Mohammad Jan (TAi.003).

13. However, the Team was also informed that Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour had determined that the Taliban political commission, now headquartered in Doha, for the time being is free to pursue meetings with Afghans "in their personal capacity". According to information provided to the Monitoring Team and media reports, at least one meeting of this nature was held in May 2015.[8] That meeting included senior figures of the High Peace Council and was followed by an official Taliban statement.[9] The position expressed by the political commission in those contacts was that the presence of foreigners was tantamount to the

[5] According to the assessment of the Monitoring Team, one potential explanation why Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour Shah Mohammad (TAi.011), despite his critical stance towards negotiations (see below), has not taken any concrete action to stop the group around Mullah Gul Agha Ishakzai (TAi.147) could be that Gul Agha Ishakzai, the top financial manager of the movement, is involved in this project. Gul Agha Ishakzai's newly found willingness to negotiate in turn might also be motivated by his responsibility for the finances of the movement. The current situation seems to mirror 2010, when Abdul Wasay Mu'tasim Agha (delisted on 19 July 2012), at that time the top financial manager of the Taliban movement, also began to advocate negotiations.

[6] Qayum Zaker reconciled in January 2015 with Akhtar Mansur after developing differences over his performance as military leader. Mansur had edged Zaker out over his failure to significantly disrupt the first round of the Afghan presidential elections in April 2014.

[7] The Peshawar Shura is not a geographical term, but an analytical concept describing a group of Taliban leaders.

[8] See for example: Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, "Report of a 2-day Pugwash meeting on Security in Afghanistan", Qatar, 2 to 3 May 2015.

[9] See for example: "Full text of the Statement delivered by the Delegation of Political Office of the Islamic Emirate in the International Pugwash Research Conference" published on the Taliban website on 7 May 2015.

continuation of war in Afghanistan. Taliban representatives continue to present new preconditions before entering into any kind of negotiations with the Government.[10]

IV. Status of the Taliban

14. The internal structure of the Taliban movement appears to have evolved still further since the last report. Instead of a separate "mining office", reference is now being made to the "Organ for collecting and organizing special revenue". This may well reflect the growing role of local fundraising from mining operations and extortion.

15. The Taliban military commission appears to have been restructured into nine regional subcommands. Five Taliban quick reaction forces are being currently developed, with each unit having the goal of being between 200 and 500 men strong and in charge of three provinces. One such unit is reportedly in charge of Herat, Farah and Nimroz provinces, and another for Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces. These forces are directly under the command of senior Taliban commanders who also act as shadow governors of key provinces, such as Qayum Zaker, Sirajuddin Jallaloudine Haqqani (TAi.144) and Qari Baryal (not listed).

16. Splinter groups, such as Fidayi Mahaz,[11] continue to be active. Some Afghan security force reports allege that Fidayi Mahaz has also declared loyalty to ISIL, but recent pronouncements on its website indicate that it continues to market activities under their original name.[12] In addition to threatening the Taliban political commission in Qatar, a separate threat was made against Habib ur-Rahman Hekmatyar, son of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (QDi.088), for colluding with the Government in January 2015.[13]

17. The Haqqani Network (TDe.012) continues to be active as part of the insurgency, despite sustained military efforts by Pakistan targeting some centres of Haqqani Network activity, most notably through its military campaign in North Waziristan, Pakistan. The arrest of Anas Haqqani (not listed) and Hafiz Rashid (not listed) at the end of 2014 was a significant success of the Afghan security and intelligence apparatus and a blow to the network. Nevertheless, the current string of attacks in Kabul seems to demonstrate that the Haqqani Network had been weakened only temporarily. In addition, the Haqqani Network and splinter groups, such as Fidayi Mahaz, are currently extremely unlikely to participate in or commit to a reconciliation process with the Government of Afghanistan.

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[10] The Taliban website, on 7 May 2015, under the title "Islamic Emirate believes in intra-Afghan dialogue", listed several preconditions for talks with the Government. The article demanded the abolishment of the presence of foreign troops as the "occupation", the 1988 sanctions regime as the "black list", international arrest warrants as the "reward list" and the ongoing detention of Taliban as "political prisoners". The article also demanded the creation of an office in Qatar as "an official address for the Islamic Emirate".

[11] Fidayi Mahaz was also previously called Da Fidayano Mahaz and Dadullah Front.

[12] The website of Fidayi Mahaz claimed attacks against Afghan security forces in the provinces of Jawzjan, Sari Pul and Kunduz in April and May 2015.

[13] Anonymous article on the website of Fidayi Mahaz, "Someone for friendship and someone for enmity", posted on 28 February 2015, showing Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's son with Afghan police officers.

V. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

18. The number of groups and individuals who are openly declaring either loyalty to or sympathy with ISIL continues to grow in a number of provinces in Afghanistan. Afghan security force estimates shared with the Monitoring Team suggest that around 10 per cent of the active Taliban-dominated insurgency are ISIL sympathizers. However, this percentage is not static, as allegiances and statements vary during the ongoing fighting season. However, the viral spread of ISIL branding is in evidence, with sightings of groups with some form of ISIL branding or sympathy reported in 25 provinces in Afghanistan, according to Afghan Government sources. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces has reported that it has encountered or observed ISIL-affiliated groups in the provinces of Badakhshan, Badghis, Balkh, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Herat, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Kapisa, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Logar, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Paktya, Paktika, Sari Pol, Takhar, Uruzgan, Wardak and Zabul.

19. According to a number of Afghan security officials, groups that have declared loyalty to ISIL in Afghanistan can be divided into three categories: the largest number of individuals has been recruited from within already existing insurgent groups, some of which are disgruntled with the central leadership of the Taliban. One example is the case of Abdul Rauf Khadem (TAi.025), who earlier had changed his religious affiliation and had repeatedly clashed with the Taliban leadership. In his turbulent career he repeatedly held the office of shadow governor of Uruzgan province. He was also the chief of the Taliban intelligence commission and special adviser to Mullah Mohammed Omar. In October 2014, he reportedly visited Iraq and upon his return collected followers among the Taliban in Helmand and Farah provinces by paying out large sums of money. Another individual, Abdul Rahim Muslimdost (not listed), had been a fringe member of the Taliban movement before declaring himself loyal to ISIL. These individuals use the new "brand" of ISIL as a convenient label under which they can organize and create a distinct new identity in contrast to the "traditional" Taliban leadership. The second largest group of individuals that operates under the ISIL banner in Afghanistan is made up of fighters who have fled into Afghanistan owing to the ongoing Pakistani military operations in the border region. These individuals formerly belonged to groups such as Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (QDe.132) and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (QDe.010) and rebranded themselves in recent months. Many of these individuals have close connections to, or sympathize with, the Al-Qaida movement. Finally, a very small number of non-Afghan individuals[14] have come to Afghanistan directly from Iraq or the Syrian Arab Republic and are considered by Afghan officials to constitute the nucleus of ISIL activities in the country.

20. While the various groups loyal to ISIL regularly engage Afghan Government forces, reports of fighting between groups loyal to ISIL and other parts of the insurgency are rare. According to Afghan security officials, in Nangarhar province groups loyal to ISIL and the Taliban are currently clashing in a struggle for resources generated by provincial drug production and trafficking. On the other hand, in Logar province, individuals loyal to ISIL seem primarily to be engaged in creating a local network of contacts and refrain from fighting with other parts of the

[14] According to various Afghan officials, the maximum number is around 70.

insurgency that operate in the province. This tactic seems to mirror the initial period of ISIL development in the Syrian Arab Republic.

21. According to the assessment of the Government of Afghanistan, the current primary goal of ISIL in Afghanistan is to recruit sympathizers and followers and establish a network of contacts. Therefore, while Afghan security forces do not categorize the emergence of groups loyal to ISIL as an immediate increased threat, they continue to monitor the situation closely, as these developments constitute a potential new threat to both Afghanistan and the wider region.

22. It is noteworthy that the connection between groups that declare their loyalty to ISIL in Afghanistan and ISIL central propaganda outlets in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic seems to be unclear. While the internal propaganda in Afghanistan and Pakistan of groups that consider themselves loyal to ISIL frequently report on attacks against Government forces, the central outlet of ISIL, Al-Bayan Media, rarely takes these attacks up in its regular status reports concerning the activities of ISIL and its affiliates outside Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

23. Nevertheless, the Monitoring Team observed a marked increase in the quality of propaganda activities of the Taliban movement on its official website since the end of 2014. In particular, the propaganda material of the movement in English has significantly improved in style and content, appearing to be geared more towards an international audience and media outlets. This increased quality coincides with the beginning of propaganda efforts related to ISIL in Afghanistan. Therefore, according to interlocutors of the Monitoring Team in the Government of Afghanistan, this development is the first sign of a competition between the Taliban and movements related to ISIL. Unfortunately, this also means that the national and international public relations and outreach efforts of the Government of Afghanistan are now competing with increasingly capable adversaries.

VI. Al-Qaida and associates

24. Afghan interlocutors pointed to the continuing presence of Al-Qaida-associated radical groups in the border regions of the country that were pushed out of Pakistan's tribal areas by the ongoing Pakistani military operations. Afghan interlocutors explained that these groups, although not yet forming an organized block, have contributed to further insecurity in the border areas, as they are not only fighting Afghan security forces, but also target other sections of the Afghan insurgency.

25. High-ranking Afghan security officials assessed that there has been no overall strategic change to the position of Al-Qaida-affiliated groups in Afghanistan. Al-Qaida-affiliated groups remain a threat to peace and security in the country. They act as trainers and facilitators, especially for improvised explosive devices. Numerically they continue to form the minority of the active fighting forces of the overall insurgency. Among new aspects of the threat of Al-Qaida inside Afghanistan is the growing visibility of groups that have declared loyalty to ISIL and additional fighters who flow across the border with Pakistan to escape the ongoing Pakistani military operations.

26. Since the beginning of 2015, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (QDe.010) has gained visibility across Afghanistan (see S/2014/888, para. 40). On

24 February 2015, IMU fighters, together with Taliban elements, abducted 31 travellers from the road in Zabul. These were later exchanged for foreign fighters that Afghan forces had arrested earlier in Faryab and Badakhshan provinces. This exchange was facilitated through negotiations conducted by local Taliban from Zabul. Afghan interlocutors suggest that the increased presence of IMU fighters in the country is due to Pakistani military operations in North Waziristan (which the Team visited in January 2015, noting the significant progress made by the Pakistan army at considerable cost to Pakistan). In addition, parts of IMU seem to have rebranded themselves. For example, at the end of March 2015, a statement attributed to Uthman Ghazi (not listed), the leader of IMU, challenged the leadership of Mullah Omar (TAi.004)[15] over the insurgency in Afghanistan and seemed to switch the overall loyalty of IMU to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (QDi.299)[16] and ISIL.[17] In a video published by the IMU media wing, Tohir Abdulkhalilovich Yuldashev (deceased, formerly listed) is portrayed as having called for the establishment of the caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi throughout his career following the irreversible fall of the Islamic Emirate headed by Mullah Omar.[18]

VII. 1988 sanctions: outcomes

27. Since the fifth report of the Monitoring Team, the following outcomes have been delivered.

28. The Security Council 1988 Committee has agreed to the recommendations of the Monitoring Team in its first and fourth reports (see S/2012/689, para. 33 and S/2014/402, para. 36) and, as a result, unofficial translations of the list entries and narrative summaries of all listed individuals in Dari[19] and Pashto[20] are now available on the website of the 1988 sanctions Committee. This has been strongly welcomed by Afghan interlocutors at both senior and working levels. The unofficial translations have also been a valuable tool for the Monitoring Team in its interactions with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in the field, enabling the Team to gather more detailed information on listed individuals.

29. The Monitoring Team has also held two training workshops, in which several dozen official participants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Peace Council, the National Security Council and investigators of the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan have gained a deeper perspective on the sanctions regime and the various sanctions measures, as well as listing, delisting and exemption procedures. This capacity-building facilitation measure familiarized newly appointed officials with the 1988 sanctions regime and enabled the Team to strengthen its working level contacts with the Government of Afghanistan. This has been particularly timely, given that the change of Government has also seen new systems and personnel changes on sanctions.

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[15] Listed as Mohammed Omar Ghulam Nabi (TAi.004).

[16] Listed as Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai (QDi.299).

[17] See for example: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Uzbek Service "Uzbek Group In Afghanistan Pledge Allegiance To Islamic State", 31 March 2015.

[18] See for example "Jund Allah Studios presents a new video message from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: Ramaḍān Message and Message on the Caliphate", 3 May 2015.

[19] Available from: www.un.org/sc/committees/1988/pdf/1988Dari.pdf.

[20] Available from: www.un.org/sc/committees/1988/pdf/1988Pashto.

30. In May 2015, the Government of Afghanistan re-established a national focal point for all issues related to 1988 sanctions within the National Security Council. The national focal point can be reached at: nationalcontactpoint@nsc.gov.af.

VIII. Sanctions list and maintenance

31. The list saw few changes over the past seven months. Since 1 November 2014 two new listings have been approved by the Committee. No individuals or entities were delisted.

IX. Implementation of sanctions

1. Travel ban

32. The implementation of the travel ban against listed individuals remains a challenge. The Monitoring Team continues to monitor regular but unconfirmed national, regional and international media reports that allege travel of listed individuals. Most of these reports allege that the travel of these listed individuals is related to ongoing efforts to start a direct negotiation process between the Taliban movement and the Government of Afghanistan. The Monitoring Team has not received official confirmation of any of these potential violations by a Member State.

33. The travel ban continues to be a powerful 1988 sanctions measure that the Taliban care about. During a recent Pugwash conference, Taliban members criticized the travel ban and noted that they cannot move freely.[9] Therefore, strict implementation of the travel ban against all listed individuals remains one opportunity to maintain leverage over the Taliban leadership.

34. During its engagement with Member States since the beginning of 2015, the Monitoring Team has observed an increase in the use of International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)-United Nations Security Council Special Notices that are issued for listed individuals. The INTERPOL National Central Bureau also connected electronically all official land and air border crossings of Afghanistan to the various INTERPOL databases, enabling a direct check of travellers and passengers against the Special Notices.

35. However, one weakness remains. Any updates to the Security Council lists are communicated through a press release and an official note verbale to all Member States. These multiple communications mean that Member States authorities and private sector stakeholders are aware of any new information concerning listed individuals from the moment that it becomes available. The Special Notices directly address the police forces within Member States, and in many cases are directly uploaded into border control and border management systems. However, there seems to be no equivalent multi-layered alert and communications mechanism for the corresponding updates on the Special Notices within the closed INTERPOL system. Ensuring that police forces of Member States are aware of the latest status of the information on the Special Notices requires further communication between various authorities within each Member State. This process could be simplified if

the Committee would communicate on a regular basis which Special Notices have been updated within a given time frame.

36. **The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee annually inform all Member States which Special Notices have been updated in the preceding year, staring from July 2015.**

37. This update could also include Special Notices for which biometric information, such as photographs, has been made available. In order to avoid creating a non-mandated new deadline for the Committee's work, the Monitoring Team suggests that this be sent along with the official communication that the Chair dispatches as part of the annual review of the list as mandated in paragraph 33 of Security Council resolution 2160 (2014).

2. Assets freeze

(a) Regulatory framework

38. Since the end of 2014 the Government of Afghanistan has steadily improved the legal and regulatory framework supporting the implementation of the asset freeze against listed individuals in Afghanistan. In 2014 Afghanistan passed the Counter-Terrorism Financing and Anti-Money Laundering Law. The Government is currently working on the finalization of the corresponding implementation regulation. In order to ensure a frictionless implementation of both the laws and the corresponding regulations, the Government has established a high-level coordination committee, chaired by the Ministry of Finance, that brings together representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, the National Directorate for Security, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Afghanistan (FinTRACA) and INTERPOL to work on the respective regulatory framework. One current challenge is the implementation of asset freeze measures against immovable assets (property). Property deeds for land and buildings are not yet formalized on a national scale. Measures in this area require a significant amount of forensic research and are very time consuming. According to official interlocutors, relevant Afghan authorities have begun to address this issue.

39. The Government of Afghanistan has also started discussions on establishing a domestic sanctions list. In addition, at the beginning of 2015 the Government passed a new cash courier regulation. Since February 2015, it is no longer allowed for individuals to cross the borders of Afghanistan with more than $10,000 in physical cash. All transactions above this amount have to be done through the commercial banking sector. In addition, new customs regulations allow the export of gold from the country only for reshaping. This has the effect of making the transport of gold as a quasi-subsidiary currency out of the country no longer possible (at least licitly). Similar regulation is planned for precious stones.

40. The registration of *hawala* businesses is steadily progressing, even outside major businesses. FinTRACA and the Da Afghanistan Bank are currently involved in a national outreach and awareness-raising programme funded by the United States Department of the Treasury. Da Afghanistan Bank, in order to encourage *hawala* businesses to volunteer for registration, allows registered Money Service Providers to participate in the weekly sale of hard currency. As this hard currency is

sold at a preferential rate, the participation allows registered Money Service Providers to increase profits from their currency exchange operations.

41. According to official interlocutors of the Monitoring Team, FinTRACA has frozen successive accounts of Haji Khairullah Haji Sattar Money Exchange (TAe.010) over the past year. Abdul Satar Abdul Manan (TAi.162) and Khairullah Barakzai Khudai Nazar (TAi.163) had attempted to re-establish their business through transferring quasi control over the business to various associates that acted as frontmen for both listed individuals. These transfers, however, did not affect the beneficial ownership of the entity. Consequently, as soon as FinTRACA became aware of this obvious attempt to avert Security Council sanctions measures, it reimplemented the asset freeze on the newly established accounts and reclosed the offices of the entity in Herat City.

(b) Taliban exploitation of Afghanistan's mining potential

42. The Taliban movement continues to generate significant assets through the direct or indirect illegal exploitation of natural resources in Afghanistan. There is no strategic change from the situation described in the fifth report of the Monitoring Team from November 2014 (S/2014/888). However, during its provincial visits since the publication of the fifth report, the Monitoring Team was able to gather additional details on the various attempts of the insurgency to benefit from the exploitation of natural resources in Afghanistan.

43. According to Afghan officials, in Nangarhar province, the Taliban have been able to gain control of significant mining operations. Talcum mining seems to be a particular concern. In Herat province, the insurgency regularly launches attacks against marble quarry locations. The most recent attack occurred on 15 May 2015. According to Afghan security officials, the strategic object of these attacks is to intimidate the local business community in order to extort payments from the legal mining operations and to steal mining equipment. Taliban groups also regularly "tax" transport vehicles on the roads leading from the marble mines to Herat City.[21]

44. According to interlocutors of the Monitoring Team within the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, the Taliban have succeeded in gaining control of two of the three possible access roads to the lapis lazuli mine in the north of the province. Therefore, the Taliban would currently be in a position to extort payments from the transport of mined lapis lazuli. However, according to Afghan interlocutors, the National Security Council of Afghanistan decided to postpone the renewal of the mining licence in January 2015 because of a legal dispute between the former licence holder and the Government.[22] As a result, no legal mining of new lapis lazuli is possible in Afghanistan at present.[23] Meanwhile, according to Afghan officials, the Taliban have established an illegal gold mining operation in Raghistan district in the north of Badakhshan province.

[21] Herat City is the main export point for marble quarried in the province.

[22] See for example: Pahjwok Afghan News, "Azure worth 1b afs seized in Badakhshan", 14 February 2015.

[23] There are three mining locations for lapis lazuli in Afghanistan. All three mines are located in Badakhshan province, one in Jurm district, one In Kuran Wa Munjan district and one in Zebak district. However, none of the three mines currently holds a valid licence from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum.

45. Taliban exploitation of mines in areas under their control or influence and involvement in the smuggling of products abroad continue in the provinces of Ghazni, Wardak, Sari Pul, Kandahar, Paktya, Helmand, Khost, Logar and Zabul. There is no precise estimate of the Taliban's overall income from these illegal mining operations and extortion activities. However, various Afghan officials described the income from these activities as very significant, perhaps totalling nationally at least several dozen million United States dollars annually and second only to Taliban revenue generation from narcotics.

46. The Government of Afghanistan is keenly aware of the fact that the insurgency is illegally exploiting the natural resources of the country as one of its financial sources to fund the war against the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. Therefore, as a first counter measure the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has compiled a database of all licenced mining operations in the country, including their location in Afghanistan. The ministry is currently double-checking the data of this list and aims, after official approval has been obtained, to issue the list as an official document. Officials from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum agreed to provide the list to the Committee as soon as it is officially issued as a Government document. Such an official list would enable traders of natural resources inside Afghanistan, as well as regional and international traders, to double-check whether the material offered comes from a licenced mining operation or not.

47. **The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee include this list in the forthcoming communication with all Member States on illegal mining, in order to raise awareness and to enable private sector stakeholders to strengthen their due diligence processes (see S/2014/402, para. 55).**

(c) Taliban assets from narcotics

48. According to data provided to the Team by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Afghanistan set a record for growing opium poppies in 2014.[24] The total area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was estimated to be 224,000 hectares in 2014, a 7 per cent increase from the previous year. In 2014, the average farm-gate price (weighted by production) of dry opium at harvest time was $133 per kilogram in 2014. Consequently, the total farm-gate value of opium production in Afghanistan in 2014 reached $850 million.

49. The threat picture of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which locates the various insurgency groups and their areas of operations in the country, continues to demonstrate an overlap with the zones in which narcotics are grown and refined in Afghanistan. The most striking case in this regard is the Sangin district in Helmand province. The central location of the district in the transport network of the south of Afghanistan and the fact that the district houses a number of heroin laboratories explains, according to the assessment of official interlocutors of the Team, why the Taliban movement continues to make significant efforts to retain control of the district. Therefore, official interlocutors of the Team and the data the Team gathered during its various visits to Afghanistan since the beginning of 2015

[24] See for example, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, "Afghan Opium Survey 2014, Cultivation and Production", Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2014; available from www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf.

seem to indicate that the majority of the farm-gate value of opium production in Afghanistan benefitted the insurgency either directly or indirectly.

3. Arms embargo

50. High-ranking Afghan officials in the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continue to emphasize that the Taliban and other groups of the insurgency in Afghanistan continue to procure the main part of their weapons and ammunition outside Afghanistan in Member States neighbouring the country. This supply line seems to be unbroken and the Government of Afghanistan is in continuing discussions and negotiations with the Member States concerned in order to address this difficult issue.

51. Since the last report, the Monitoring Team continued to engage relevant Afghan security officials on the issue of the use of industrially produced spare parts of improvised explosive devices, such as detonators, detonating cords and remote-controlled triggers, and has regularly updated the Committee on this issue through its trip reports. Since the end of 2014 no strategic change has occurred. Improvised explosive devices continue to be used widely and indiscriminately by the Taliban in their fight with Government forces. As documented by regular reports of the United Nations Assistance Mission of Afghanistan (UNAMA), the steady increase of improvised explosive devices as a weapon of choice of the Taliban is one of the main factors for the continuing rise in civilian casualties of the conflict.[25]

52. As previewed in the fifth report (see S/2014/888, para. 61), the Team has had detailed discussions with private sector stakeholders in the Afghan mining industry and the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. The Ministry, in cooperation with Afghan security agencies, is responsible for the issuing and oversight of licences to import explosive materials for mining operations into the country. In cooperation with these interlocutors, the Monitoring Team explored whether further strengthening of the regulatory system could produce a significant impact on the ability of the Taliban to obtain these parts inside the country. Through these discussions it became clear that the continuing development of the regulatory framework in Afghanistan during the last years has already strengthened internal controls and introduced detailed monitoring and auditing mechanisms, very similar to the ideas that the Monitoring Team had already suggested in its third report (see S/2013/656, paras. 59-61). Therefore, further strengthening of the control and management of detonators, detonating cords and explosive materials inside Afghanistan is unlikely to have a noticeable impact on the availability of these industrially produced parts for the Taliban.

53. Apart from the strengthening of the internal control mechanisms, a second opportunity to undermine Taliban resupply from improvised explosive device manufacturers may lie in greater efforts concentrated on the sources of these parts outside Afghanistan. In its third report the Monitoring Team had already highlighted the important role of appropriate risk awareness of Member States neighbouring

[25] The most recent UNAMA report documents this trend and attributes 72 per cent of all civilian casualties to anti-Government elements. See: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Kabul, Afghanistan, February 2015; available from http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf.

Afghanistan, as well as Member States wishing to invest in the extractive sector in Afghanistan (see S/2013/656, para. 64). The Monitoring Team will continue to engage relevant Member States on this issue to increase attention of the relevant authorities to this issue. Regional initiatives, such as the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan in the "Heart of Asia", also play an important role here.[26]

X. Work of the Monitoring Team

1. Analysis, monitoring and implementation

54. Since it submitted its fifth report, the Monitoring Team has continued to focus on its core business, namely, analysing the threat posed by the Taliban and their affiliates to peace, stability and security in Afghanistan, providing advice on listings and focusing on strengthening the impact of the sanctions regime. The Team's advantage lies in its ability to work collaboratively with Governments around the world, in particular the Government of Afghanistan. The Team also reaches out to external specialists in order to make an integrated assessment of the threat posed by the Taliban and associates and to advance a targeted, effective and fair sanctions regime. The Team's own expertise on Afghanistan, together with that of specialists on finance, arms and border security measures, continues to sustain these efforts.

2. Cooperation with Member States, academic and civil society experts

55. In addition to its cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan and other relevant Member States, the Monitoring Team established new cooperation with officials from the Combined Maritime Forces Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150) in Manama. The Task Force is a multinational naval force that conducts counter-terrorism operations in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Task Force regularly seizes significant amounts of narcotics that seem to be of Afghan origin.[27] Through its cooperation with the Task Force, the Government of Afghanistan and UNODC, the Monitoring Team will ascertain whether the seized narcotics are part of the Taliban asset generation structure and would offer opportunities for an increase in the strengthening of the asset freeze against individuals listed on the 1988 sanctions list.

56. **The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee invite the command of Combined Maritime Task Force 150 to brief the Committee, with particular reference to their actions against Afghan narcotics, as this should inform the Committee's understanding of indirect financing sources for the Taliban and selected listed individuals and entities.**

[26] The process includes an expert working group on the issue of improvised explosive devices in Afghanistan. See Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process "Regional Technical Group Meeting (RTG). Counter Terrorism Confidence Building Measure (CT-CBM). Outcome Report", Ankara, Turkey, 11 March 2015; available from www.heartofasia-istanbulprocess.af/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Outcome-Document-of-CT-RTG-Ankara.pdf.

[27] See for example: Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-150 ship seizes $22.4m heroin in Arabian Sea", 28 May 2014.

57. The Monitoring Team also continued to engage academic and civil society experts on the Taliban movement and the situation in Afghanistan. Since November 2014, the Team engaged with Afghan analysts and academics on its visits to the country. In addition, the Team participated in conferences on Afghanistan and the region at Ditchley Park and Chatham House in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Council on Foreign Relations in the United States of America. The Team has also engaged academics in Germany, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan.

3. Cooperation with other United Nations bodies

58. The Monitoring Team continues to closely cooperate with UNAMA and is grateful for the support the Team receives on a regular basis from UNAMA under the leadership of Nicholas Haysom during and in between its visits to the country.

59. In addition, the Monitoring Team continues to engage with relevant UNODC experts on the drug economy in Afghanistan, and has begun to cooperate with experts on the Afghan mining industry of the United Nations Environment Programme to increase its understanding of this sector of the Afghan economy and deepen the Team's assessment of the illegal exploitation of natural resources by the Taliban.

4. Cooperation between the Security Council and the International Criminal Police Organization

60. The Monitoring Team has established intensive and frequent cooperation with the National Central Bureau of INTERPOL in Kabul. This new cooperation regularly results in the exchange of threat assessments and the provision of official information on listed individuals to the Team.

61. Thanks to the work of the INTERPOL New York Liaison Office and United Nations staff members mandated to support the work of the Monitoring Team, the Team has also received relevant information on listed individuals and entities from various INTERPOL National Central Bureaus located in Member States.

5. Contributing to the public debate

62. The Team would welcome feedback on the analysis and suggestions contained in the present report, which can be sent to 1988mt@un.org.

Annex

Structure of the Taliban

The Taliban responded to rumours that their leader Mullah Omar might be deceased by publishing alongside his biography an overview of their claimed internal structure, following up on a similar message dated September 2014. In marked contrast to the previous message, the 2015 message clarifies that central decision-making rests with Mullah Akhtar Mansour.

Taliban central structure

A. Office of Amir al-Mu'minin: it is claimed by the Taliban website that Mullah Omar continues to oversee his deputy Mullah Akhtar Mansour, the leadership council, the judiciary, nine executive commissions and three other administration organs

B. Leadership council: it is claimed by the Taliban website to have 20 members, including Muhammad Hassan Babar (TAi.002), Mullah Mohammadullah Mati, also known as Mullah Nanay (TAi.068), Muhammad Hassan Rahmani (TAi.096), Noor Mohammad Saqib (TAi.110), Mawlawi Kabir (TAi.003), Qayum Zaker (not listed, rejoined since January 2015), Mawlawi Sayyid Abdul Rahman (not listed), Abdul Qadeer Basir (TAi.128), Mullah Shirin (not listed), Mullah Muhammad Rahmatullah (not listed)

C. Courts and judges: reportedly presided over by Hajji Mawlawi Ubaydullah Akhundzada (not listed)

Taliban commissions and "organs" (independent directorates):

1. Military commission: appoints provincial shadow governors, deputy shadow governors for all 34 provinces, district shadow governors, and in each district group commanders and squad leaders. The military commission is claimed to have its own terms of reference and to organize training of Taliban forces. It is reportedly led by Mullah Ibrahim Sadar (not listed).
2. Political commission: includes Tayyib Agha (not listed), Hajji Din Mohammad (TAi.043), Shahabuddin Delawar and Abdul Salam Hanafi (TAi.027)
3. Cultural commission: Amir Khan Motaqi (TAi.026)
4. Financial and economic commission: Mullah Gul Agha Ishakzai (TAi.147)
5. Health commission: Mullah Abbas Akhund (TAi.066)
6. Education commission
7. Outreach and guidance commission
8. Prisoners' commission
9. Non-governmental organization commission
10. Organ for the prevention of civilian casualties

11. Organ for Martyrs' and disabled people

12. Organ for collecting and organizing special revenue

Senior Taliban leaders who are not listed under the sanctions regime

The newly emerged Taliban leadership in the provinces is not listed for the most part. Nine of the 33 individuals listed below were already featured in the annex to the previous report. Their names are marked with an asterisk (*). In order to reflect the networks of the Taliban, the Team also marked the original affiliation of the individual in brackets: (QS) = Quetta Shura network; (PS) = Peshawar Shura network; (HQN) = Haqqani Network.

Name	*Function*
Qari Fasihuddin (QS) (*)	Shadow governor, Badakhshan
Doctor Fazlullah (QS)	Military commander, Badakhshan
Mullah Amanuddin (QS)	Military commander, Badakhshan
Mullah Abdulhakim a.k.a. Abdulqayum (QS)	Shadow governor, Badghis
Mawlawi Mohammad (QS)	Shadow governor, Baghlan
Mullah Sayid Sulayman Agha (QS)	Shadow governor, Daikundi
Mawlavi Baz Mohamamd (QS) (*)	Shadow governor, Farah
Mawlavi Salahuddin (QS & HQN)	Shadow governor, Faryab
Mawlavi Sadruddin Sarhadi (HQN)	Shadow governor, Ghazni
Doctor Khalili (HQN)	Haqqani commander, Ghazni-Paktya
Mawlavi Abdulkhaliq (QS) (*)	Shadow governor, Ghor
Mullah Jaylani (QS)	Taliban shadow governor, Helmand
Mawlavi Abdulwali Shuaybkhel (QS)	Taliban shadow governor, Herat
Hafiz Mohibullah (QS)	Taliban shadow governor, Kabul
Mawlavi Gad Haji Lalla (PS) (*)	Taliban shadow governor, Kandahar
Ghazi Noorullah (PS)	Taliban shadow governor, Kapisa
Qari Baryal (PS) (*)	Taliban commander, Laghman, Kapisa, Panjsher, Parwan
Mawlavi Ahmad Jan (HQN)	Taliban shadow governor, Khost
Mawlavi Mohammad Omer Mukhlis (QS)	Taliban shadow governor, Kunar
Mawlavi Abdul Salam (*)	Taliban shadow governor, Kunduz
Shah Rahman (HQN)	Haqqani commander, Kunduz

Name	*Function*
Qari Zubair (Jundullah)	Head of Jundullah, Kunduz
Mawlavi Amin Jan Kochi (PS)	Taliban shadow governor, Laghman
Mawlavi Mir Ahmad Gul (PS)	Shadow governor, Nangarhar
Abdul Rahim Muslimdost (ISIL)	ISIL commander, Nangarhar
Mawlavi Abdul Qayum Rohani (QS) (*)	Shadow governor, Nimroz
Mawlavi Esmatullah (PS)	Shadow governor, Nuristan
Mullah Adam Khan Kochi (HQN)	Haqqani commander, Paktya Logar
Mawlawi Ismail (PS) (*)	Shadow governor, Parwan
Mawlawi Najibullah Attaullah (QS)	Shadow governor, Sari Pul
Qari Ahmadullah Mullahkhel (PS) (*)	Shadow governor, Wardak, former member Hezb-i Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (QDi.088)
Mullah Nasrullah Matiullah (PS)	Shadow governor, Zabul
Mansoor Dadullah (FM)	Fidayi Mahaz commander, Zabul

Source: Government of Afghanistan.

United Nations A/ES-10/688–S/2015/649

General Assembly
Security Council

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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 18 August 2015 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to inform you that on 18 August 2015, in Ramallah, the Council of Ministers of the State of Palestine held its weekly meeting, which was chaired by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, and issued a statement that included the following points:

- The Council condemned the execution of Rafiq Kamil al-Taj, aged 21, of Tubas, who was shot five times and killed by occupation forces near Bayta. It also condemned the execution of Muhammad Bassam Mustafa Amshah al-Atrash, aged 22, of Kafr Ra'i, at the military checkpoint of Za'tarah south of Nablus. The Council rejected the spurious pretexts put forward by the occupation forces to justify the execution of Palestinian citizens. The Council emphasized that the Israeli Government bore responsibility for those crimes, which were the result of its aggressive and terrorist policy of inciting the murder of Palestinians. Israeli ministers have openly stated that occupation soldiers should kill Palestinians. Those statements have encouraged terrorist settler gangs to follow suit and commit yet more terrorist crimes against the defenceless Palestinian people in occupied East Jerusalem and other governorates of the nation. The Council urged the institutions of the international community, particularly the Security Council, to assume their moral and legal responsibility to protect the Palestinian people from the daily Israeli crimes against its citizens.

- The Council condemned the demolition and confiscation of 21 housing and farming units in the areas of Khan al-Ahmar, Za'im, Bir Maskub and Wadi Sunaysil in occupied East Jerusalem. It also condemned the serving of final evacuation orders to 20 families in the Abu Nawar community. The Council deplored the policy of forcibly displacing 46 Bedouin communities in the so-called E1 zone for the benefit of settlers. It called on the international

community to fulfil its responsibility under international law, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and other relevant international instruments, which require Israel to bring an end to all illegal and inhumane measures against civilians, including home demolitions and displacement. The international community should also take action to protect Palestinian housing communities that live under threat from the occupation.

- The Council condemned the series of daily violations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which have also affected women and children; the occupation police has compiled a list of 20 Palestinian civilian women forbidden from entering the mosque. The Council commended the courage and resilience of the children of the summer camps in the city of Jerusalem, who prevented groups of extremist terrorist settlers from reaching the Dome of the Rock esplanade. The settler groups, which belonged to the so-called Temple Mount Faithful, had attempted to raid the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque from the Mughrabi Gate along with a substantial occupation police escort.

- The Council condemned the actions of the so-called Nature and Parks Authority which, along with large number of occupation police force members, raided a 7-dunam plot of land belonging to the Al-Husayni and Al-Ansari families. The Authority began installing barbed wire around the land, which is adjacent to the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the north-eastern side, thereby separating it from the graveyard with a view to absorbing it. That action was part of a series of confiscations that have been carried out by settler groups and the Israeli Government in and around Jerusalem.

- The Council condemned the current settler attack on the town of Silwan and, in particular, the Batn al-Hawa quarter. It also condemned the Israeli occupation plan overseen by the extremist organization Ateret Cohanim with the purpose of gaining control of some 100 Palestinian housing units, which are home to 1,500 Jerusalemite citizens. The Israeli Government and its various settler extensions have called for bids to build a synagogue to be known as "Jewel of Israel" in the old town of occupied Jerusalem. The Council stressed that this daily encroachment on the part of the settlers is taking place with the blessing of the Israeli Government and its extremist components. The Israeli Government has allocated hundreds of millions of shekels per year to protecting those organizations and their activities in the Arab quarters of the Holy City. Its aim is to collectively displace Palestinian families from their homes and city as part of a policy of Judaizing the Holy City and altering its characteristics. The Council warned of the consequences of the bare-faced escalation of Israeli violations, all of which are intended to rob the Holy City and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque of their Islamic and Christian historic and cultural heritage. The international community must break its silence, and Arab and Islamic States must take a firm stance regarding the threat facing the Holy City and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Council urged all States and the United Nations and its specialized agencies to take action in order to cut off the extremist settler groups' sources of funding around the world.

- The Council called on the United Nations entities and the relevant institutions and committees to break their silence regarding Israel's flagrant violations of international law and international humanitarian law in its treatment of

prisoners. Israel's policy of administrative detention has blighted the lives of Palestinian prisoners. The most recent case is that of Muhammad Allan, who has been on hunger strike since 14 June 2015 in protest at his unjust administrative detention. Prison staff have received clear legal permission to commit yet more lethal crimes against Palestinian prisoners and detainees. A racist law has been adopted to authorize the force-feeding of hunger strikers. The Council called on the high contracting parties to the Geneva Conventions to prevail on the occupation government to put an end to illegal administrative detention, implement the Declaration of the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, hold accountable anyone who violates the Geneva Conventions, and secure the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners, particularly administrative detainees. The Council called on special rapporteurs to visit the jails of the occupation and observe the arbitrary repressive measures that are in force. That step is particularly urgent given the recent escalation imposed by prison administrators, including nightly raids of prison wings and cells, a frenzied campaign of abuse and searches, the rescission of the prisoners' achievements and the destruction of their personal possessions.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 550 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 11 August 2015 (A/ES-10/687-S/2015/616), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer

United Nations S/2015/650

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 August 2015

Original: English

Letter dated 19 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to your attention the aggressive joint military exercise known as "Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG)", which is now being conducted by the United States of America in South Korea against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The United States-led joint military exercises, including UFG, which are staged one after another every year on the Korean peninsula and beyond, are serious provocations, as well as a typical expression of the hostile policy of the United States against the DPRK.

The United States is again attempting to cover up the aggressive and dangerous nature of such exercises by describing them as "annual" or "defensive".

However, such real war-like military manoeuvres, which mobilize massive armed forces and nuclear war means with a purpose of occupying Pyongyang, the capital of the DPRK, can neither be "defensive" nor justified as "routine" under the pretext of "annual basis".

The United States is going to force the DPRK into an arms race through ceaseless war drills and arms build-up in a sinister bid to place hurdles in the way of efforts of the DPRK for economic development and improvement of people's lives and to seek an opportunity for a preemptive attack on the DPRK by making it inattentive to increased vicious cycles of tensions.

The United States war games clearly prove that it is the United States that instigates the vicious cycles of escalating confrontation and tension and creating the danger of war on the Korean peninsula.

The United States-led aggressive and provocative large-scale joint military exercises are no longer issues confined to the DPRK and the United States, or the inter-Korean relations, but are an international issue that threatens the peace and security in Northeast Asia and beyond.

Therefore, I request that the issue of the United States joint military exercises be placed on the agenda of the Security Council, and that a meeting of the Security Council be urgently held in accordance with Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations.

15-14093 (E) 210815

Please recycle

I would like to remind that the Security Council has unjustifiably ignored the several requests of the DPRK to place the issue of the United States joint military exercises on the agenda of the Security Council.

Should the Security Council again ignore the just request of the DPRK to discuss the United States joint military exercises, it will expose that it is giving up its primary mission of maintaining international peace and security and becoming a political tool of an individual power.

If the United States persistently opts for military confrontation despite the repeated warnings of the DPRK and the shared denunciation by the international community, it will be held wholly accountable for all the ensuing consequences.

The DPRK will not wait indefinitely for the United States to change its DPRK policy by seeing its sovereignty and security being threatened, but will make all necessary steps to deter the United States nuclear provocation.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **JA** Song Nam
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2015/651

Security Council

Distr.: General
20 August 2015

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the eighteenth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Council resolution 2165 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2191 (2014), in which the Council requested me to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground, from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and from open sources. Data from United Nations agencies and partners on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 31 July 2015, when available. More recent data have been included, when available.

II. Major developments

A. Political/military

3. Widespread conflict and high levels of fighting continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period. Explosive weapons continued to be used, including in populated areas. Indiscriminate shelling and attacks by non-State armed groups,[1] extremist and designated terrorist groups and indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, by government forces left tens of thousands of civilians dead, injured and displaced.

4. In Rif Dimashq governorate, government forces intensified their aerial bombardment of areas under the control of non-State armed groups. According to local sources, there was an average of nine aerial raids per day on the eastern Ghutah area during the Eid al-Fitr period (19-23 July), in particular on the city of Irbin, where some 15 people were killed and scores more injured. On 27 July, at least 15 civilians, including women and children, were killed and no less than

[1] On 30 May 2013, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council in accordance with resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Please recycle

40 others injured in Duma when government forces carried out six air strikes on a residential area, causing massive destruction to residential buildings. On 16 and 17 August, government air raids in Duma resulted in one of the bloodiest attacks since the conflict began in March 2011, killing at least 96 civilians and injuring more than 200 others. Meanwhile, government-controlled areas in Damascus were also subject to intensified shelling by non-State armed groups. On 4 July, for example, two civilians were killed and at least three others injured when mortar shells fell on Baghdad Street. Heavy fighting between government forces and non-State armed groups, including the indiscriminate use of weapons, was reported in the Jawbar district of Damascus during the last week of July, following an offensive by the groups, leaving civilians dead and injured. At the end of July, the Government reportedly prevented the movement of civilians and food from Tall and Qadsiya on the outskirts of Damascus.

5. Fighting among the Nusrah Front, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and pro-government Palestinian factions continued inside and around the Yarmouk camp in Damascus during the reporting period. Reports indicated that government forces were continuing to carry out sporadic attacks with artillery and mortars on the camp, mainly around the front lines. On 14 July, a mortar attack allegedly killed a child inside the camp. Negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Nusrah Front to demilitarize the camp continued, but with no significant progress.

6. During the reporting period, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remained extremely concerned about the safety and humanitarian needs of the thousands of civilians still in Yarmouk and the thousands more displaced to the surrounding areas of Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham, whose situation neither improved nor diminished in terms of its urgency or gravity. The humanitarian and living conditions for Palestine refugees in Yarmouk and the neighbouring communities remained extremely dire. In July, there was an outbreak of typhoid, with tens of cases credibly reported, illustrating the worsening situation for the refugees and others still living in the area. In the last week of July, non-State armed groups imposed restrictions on the movement of civilians between Yarmouk and Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham; they were subsequently lifted, but access beyond the neighbouring communities for residents of Yarmouk remained heavily constrained.

7. All UNRWA operations in Yarmouk remained suspended, with no missions possible during the reporting period. The most recent UNRWA mission inside Yarmouk was conducted on 28 March and its last successful mission to the surrounding areas of Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham was on 7 June. Following several démarches, two most recently on 26 July regarding the typhoid outbreak and access to Yalda, the Syrian authorities granted UNRWA authorization to provide health care to civilians in Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham on 11 August. The authorization was expressly linked to tackling the typhoid outbreak and did not permit the provision of food, water or other humanitarian services or supplies. While UNRWA access to the three communities has been curtailed since June, other humanitarian organizations have reportedly been allowed to continue their operations and deliver assistance there. For example, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent has reportedly been able to deliver assistance on a near-daily basis. According to community leaders in Yalda, the local agreement reached in the three communities

is holding and the Government has allowed up to 12 tons of commercial items to reach the area each day.

8. In the Qalamun region of Rif Dimashq governorate, government forces, backed by Hizbullah, continued to advance on the strategic city of Zabadani. Local sources in Zabadani claimed that it was under heavy bombardment and shelling, including with barrel bombs and missiles, on a near-daily basis. The Government and allied forces reportedly cut off all routes to the town and prevented the remaining civilians from fleeing and commercial or humanitarian assistance from reaching the area. The situation for the estimated 2,000 civilians in the areas under the control of non-State armed groups remained critical. Moreover, those displaced from Zabadani to the neighbouring areas of Mamoura and Bludan were reportedly told to move to Madaya. Government forces also reportedly fired on nearby towns, including Buqayn and Madaya, killing seven civilians. While initial ceasefire negotiations between the Government and non-State armed groups were unsuccessful, a temporary ceasefire was agreed upon early in August, but later violated before United Nations humanitarian assistance could reach the area. Nevertheless, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent managed to provide 3,000 bread baskets to Bludan and the same to Madaya on 15 and 16 August.

9. In Dar'a governorate, heavy fighting continued among non-State armed groups, the Nusrah Front and government forces. On 23 July, the groups began heavy shelling of Dar'a city. There are concerns for the safety of civilians remaining there, many of whom are unable to flee. Government forces counter-attacked by intensifying shelling on areas under the groups' control. Reports indicate that at least 60 people died in Dar'a city as a result of air attacks by government forces, including those employing barrel bombs and surface-to-surface missiles, in July. For example, government jets reportedly attacked the rural village of Yadodeh with missiles on 25 July, leaving nine people dead.

10. In the northern Syrian Arab Republic, fighting continued in Aleppo governorate on a daily basis. In the city of Aleppo, an alliance of Islamist groups, including the Nusrah Front, attacked government-controlled areas from several directions. Reports indicate that some 31 civilians were killed in those areas from 1 July to 13 August. For example, a rocket attack by non-State armed groups in Midan reportedly killed four civilians on 8 July, while five children were killed and two injured when non-State armed groups fired mortar shells on the neighbourhood of Shahba' al-Jadidah on 26 July. Meanwhile, pro-government forces continued to reinforce their presence in Aleppo, launching several attacks on areas under the control of non-State armed groups. For example, an aerial attack on 8 July on the Tariq al-Bab neighbourhood caused 15 casualties, including 6 children. On 21 July, at least 15 civilians were killed when government forces reportedly fired a surface-to-surface missile on the residential neighbourhood of Maghayer.

11. Pro-government forces continued to shell areas under the control of non-State armed groups elsewhere in Aleppo governorate. More than 200 people were reportedly killed, including women and children, in July as a result of air strikes, including with barrel bombs, on markets, schools and residential neighbourhoods. For example, the Syrian forces struck a building and an adjacent mosque in the Karam al-Baik district on 8 July, reportedly killing 15 civilians, including women and children. Between 11 and 17 July, government forces dropped barrel bombs on the town of Al Bab, reportedly killing more than 70 people. On 20 July, at least

21 civilians, including 1 woman and 2 children, were killed when government jets reportedly fired missiles on the rural town of Manbij. On 21 July, government forces reportedly dropped four barrel bombs on the ISIL-held rural village of Qasr al-Burayj, in the eastern part of the governorate, reportedly killing at least 19 civilians. Meanwhile, mortar shells fired by non-State armed groups on the besieged town of Zahra' on 1 July left a civilian dead.

12. In Idlib governorate, non-State armed groups continued their offensive on government-held Foah and Kefraya, reportedly in response to the offensive by the government forces and Hizbullah on Zabadani and the lack of progress in local ceasefire negotiations. According to reports, hundreds of rockets, mortar shells and other projectiles were fired against both villages. A child was reportedly killed and many civilians injured on 21 July as a result of the attacks. Local sources claimed that at least eight civilians had been killed since the beginning of the operation on 15 July. The situation for the estimated 12,500 civilians inside the two towns remained critical, although the Government was reportedly airdropping supplies. Meanwhile, several towns and villages controlled by non-State armed groups continued to be attacked by government forces, including with barrel bombs and missiles, leaving civilians dead and injured and some 75,000 people displaced. More than 70 people were reportedly killed in July as a result of the attacks. For example, at least 16 civilians, including 2 children and 2 women, were killed on 16 July when government helicopters reportedly dropped barrel bombs on the town of Ma'arrat Misrin.

13. In Homs governorate, fighting between ISIL and government forces intensified around Tadmur (Palmyra). ISIL attacked and gained control of two checkpoints around a government airbase, seizing a significant quantity of weapons and ammunition. Government forces continued their aerial bombardment of the city and the surrounding areas. For example, government helicopters reportedly dropped barrel bombs on the city on 28 July, killing a woman and her four children. In Homs city, there were reports of an increased number of attacks against pro-government districts using improvised explosive devices. Four incidents were reported in the Akrama and Nuzha districts in July. ISIL also launched offensives on Qusayr and the surrounding area in south Homs, as well as government-held areas around the Qaryatayn area in eastern Homs, from where some 20,000 people had been displaced by early August.

14. In the governorate of Hasakah, fighting between ISIL, Kurdish militias and government forces continued on the outskirts of Hasakah city and surrounding areas, causing death and injury. Government forces reportedly launched an attack, accompanied by intensified aerial bombardment, resulting in ISIL being repelled from the areas that it had gained since 25 June in the south-west of the city. Kurdish militias, backed by international anti-ISIL coalition air strikes, launched an offensive on ISIL positions in the south-east of the city, also causing the group to retreat. Its withdrawal prompted many of the estimated 120,000 people who had fled the city following the group's advances to begin to return to their homes.

15. In the governorate of Raqqah, ISIL launched an assault on the strategic city of Ayn Isa, in the Kurdish-controlled area north of Raqqah city. The Kurdish People's Protection Units managed to recapture the city. As at the end of July, they had reached areas less than 40 km from Raqqah city, including parts of the Hasakah-Raqqah road.

16. Civilian infrastructure continued to be affected during the reporting period. Water supplies were cut off eight times in July in Aleppo city by fighting, at times deliberately by non-government parties to the conflict, affecting an estimated 1.7 million people. In some neighbourhoods, the water was cut off for more than three weeks in July. In Dar'a governorate, conflict disrupted electricity and water supplies in Dar'a city and surrounding villages for more than 10 days, affecting some 300,000 people. On 14 August, non-State armed groups announced the total cut-off of the Wadi Barada springs, which supply water to Damascus, reportedly in retaliation for the offensive against Zabadani.

17. In July, several remaining cultural heritage sites were affected by the conflict. On 2 July, ISIL destroyed the famed statue of the Lion of Athena that was located at the entrance to the Tadmur (Palmyra) museum. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage site of the old city of Aleppo also continued to suffer from fighting: on 12 July, an explosion near the citadel destroyed part of its defensive wall at its north-east side.

18. There were reports of negotiations on prisoner exchanges between the Government and non-State armed groups. In Idlib governorate, the Government released 16 detainees, with the Nusrah Front releasing seven families from Jisr al-Shughur in return. In Dar'a governorate, the Government released 42 detained women, while non-State armed groups delivered 11 bodies to government representatives.

19. During the reporting period, several local agreements between the Government and non-State armed groups came under increased strain. The security situation deteriorated in Mu'addamiyah, Rif Dimashq, with extensive shelling reported. There was very limited movement in and out of the area, with full restrictions being imposed on 11 August. In the Barzah district of Damascus, the non-State armed group negotiation committee stated that government forces had not allowed basic supplies to enter the district since the beginning of Ramadan, which had further worsened the already dire humanitarian situation inside the district and possibly endangered the agreement. In Homs city, negotiations to finalize the Wa'r agreement stalled over various issues, including the evacuation of those against the agreement. Government forces reportedly continued their military operations in the area, even though talks were continuing.

20. Following the Geneva consultations, which concluded in July and were aimed at making operational the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (Geneva communiqué), my Special Envoy for Syria announced during a briefing to the Security Council on 29 July that he and his office would continue their diplomatic efforts by establishing an intra-Syrian Arab Republic dialogue process, focusing on four key thematic working groups, among which humanitarian access would figure prominently.

B. Human rights

21. On 17 and 18 July and 10 August, the Syrian authorities bailed three prominent human rights defenders who had been detained since February 2012 on terrorism-related charges. The counter-terrorism court is scheduled to deliver a verdict in their cases on 31 August. The cases are emblematic of innumerable other cases of activists, lawyers and human rights defenders who continue to be detained

for exercising their right to freedom of expression and prosecuted in trials affording no judicial guarantees. Many detainees endure ill-treatment and torture and are held incommunicado for weeks, months or years.

22. In the governorate of Raqqah, two activists known for documenting ISIL abuses were executed by the group on 5 July following a summary trial. They were shot in the head. A video of the acts was released by the group. On 26 July, ISIL reportedly executed two homosexual men by pushing them, blindfolded, off the roof of a building in front of a crowd.

23. On 5 July, ISIL released a video purporting to show children whom it called the "Caliphate Cubs" appearing to shoot at least 25 government soldiers in the head in front of a crowd gathered at the site of the Roman amphitheatre in Tadmur (Palmyra).

24. On 3 July, Kurdish People's Protection Units entered the village of Shara in Hasakah governorate and reportedly shot dead three civilians for their alleged links with ISIL.

25. In Idlib governorate, a family of three, including a child, was killed on 12 July when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated close to their home in the town of Sarmin. Local sources claimed that the Nusrah Front had carried out the attack, although no group formally claimed responsibility.

26. In the governorate of Dayr al-Zawr, two women accused of "witchcraft" were beheaded by ISIL elements in the village of Sukkariyah on 8 July. A man was beheaded by ISIL elements on 21 July in the Aradi neighbourhood of Dayr al-Zawr city for blasphemy. The executions appeared to have followed what could be described as a summary trial.

C. Humanitarian response

27. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need in July through various means from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders, pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). The Government continued to assert that it was providing basic services to areas under its control and in many cases in areas beyond its control. The World Food Programme (WFP) delivered food assistance to 3.8 million people in 13 governorates. The World Health Organization (WHO) distributed medicines and supplies for 793,182 treatments in seven governorates. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reached almost 2.2 million people with water, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, education and psychosocial support. Routine immunization and other health-care services also reached 335,647 children. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reached 158,912 people with core relief items and protection services. The United Nations Population Fund supported its partners to deliver reproductive services and services relating to gender-based violence to some 345,000 people in 12 governorates. The International Organization for Migration reached 15,699 people with multisector assistance. UNRWA provided support to more than 200,000 Palestine refugees.

28. Cross-border deliveries continued during the reporting period. As at 31 July, the United Nations and its implementing partners had sent 154 shipments — 105 from Turkey and 49 from Jordan — to the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of

resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). They included food assistance for 1.8 million people,[2] non-food items for some 1.4 million people, water and sanitation supplies for more than 900,000 people and medical supplies for some 2.2 million treatments in Aleppo, Dar'a, Hama, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah and Qunaytirah governorates. In line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), the United Nations notified the Government in advance of each shipment, including details of content, destination district and number of beneficiaries.

29. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey. In July, it monitored 13 United Nations humanitarian shipments, confirming the humanitarian nature of each and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment had crossed the border. The Mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

30. No inter-agency convoys were conducted in July, but United Nations agencies did conduct some single-agency convoys across conflict lines. For example, WFP delivered food rations to support 78,500 people in Aleppo, Raqqah and Rif Dimashq governorates. WHO provided the local health authorities in eastern Aleppo and Dar'a with medical assistance for more than 107,000 people.

31. Both international and Syrian non-governmental organizations continued to deliver multisector assistance in July, including through the provision of ongoing services. Non-governmental organizations reached some 1.2 million people, including more than 450,000 people in Aleppo governorate, more than 250,000 people in Dar'a governorate and some 200,000 people in Idlib governorate.[3]

D. Humanitarian access

32. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to many of the 12.2 million people in need of assistance remained extremely challenging in July in many areas owing to active conflict, insecurity, shifting front lines and deliberate obstructions and interference by the parties, including restrictions on movements and burdensome administrative procedures.

33. Access to the 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas remained of critical concern and very limited compared with the level of need. Most of those people were in ISIL-controlled areas, to which the United Nations had extremely limited humanitarian access. In July, United Nations agencies and partners reached 29 of the 127 hard-to-reach locations (23 per cent). They reached 9 locations with food assistance for almost 150,000 people, 19 locations with health support for some 140,000 medical treatments, 8 locations with water, sanitation and hygiene assistance for more than 440,000 people and 3 locations with core relief items for 9,330 people.

[2] In previous reports of the Secretary-General, the volume of food assistance was used to report on cross-border food deliveries pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). Henceforth, the number of people reached with food assistance will be used. Many of the people have regularly received food assistance.

[3] The figures are based on data provided by non-governmental organization partners. They represent a snapshot of the overall non-governmental organization response rather than a complete picture.

34. Continued conflict in several governorates hindered the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance and access to essential services during the reporting period. Conflict and insecurity prevented the delivery of life-saving food assistance to more than 1.2 million people in parts of Rif Dimashq and rural parts of Homs and Hama governorates. Meanwhile, the approved inter-agency airlift to Dayr al-Zawr did not proceed owing to the security situation around the airport in Dayr al-Zawr. A spate of mortars and rockets in Damascus resulted in the distribution of non-food items by UNHCR being postponed. In the governorate of Idlib, WFP was unable to reach some 60,000 civilians in Ariha and Jisr al-Shughur, in addition to the estimated 12,500 people in the government-held towns of Foah and Kefraya, surrounded by non-State armed groups. Owing to fighting and shifting conflict lines, access from inside the Syrian Arab Republic to the governorate has remained extremely difficult since April. Accordingly, United Nations cross-border operations into Idlib have been scaled up.

35. Deliberate interference and restrictions also continued to prevent aid delivery. WFP continued to suspend its food deliveries to 600,000 people in Dayr al-Zawr and most of Raqqah governorates, where access has been impossible since May and November 2014, respectively, as a result of the difficulty of delivering humanitarian supplies through ISIL-controlled areas. Similarly, WFP was unable to reach 175,000 people in ISIL-controlled areas of rural Aleppo owing to the inability to operate safely and independently. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent was, however, able to reopen its branch in Raqqah in July and deliver chlorine and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies. UNICEF delivered water treatment supplies to cover the needs of 2 million people for five months to the water directorate of Raqqah governorate for the first time in more than 18 months. Meanwhile, in Hasakah city, UNHCR received instructions from the Governor on 26 July to suspend distribution of assistance to internally displaced persons in order to encourage them to return to their homes. The Governor authorized the resumption of assistance on 31 July.

36. WFP transported no food assistance in July as a result of the temporary closure of the Nusaybin-Qamishli crossing by the Turkish authorities for part of the month owing to the increased insecurity in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic and delays in receiving approval from the Syrian authorities. As at the beginning of August, the crossing was fully operational and deliveries had resumed.

37. As at 31 July, of a total of 81 inter-agency convoy requests, 20 had been approved in principle by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of which 9 had been completed and 1 had been partially completed. The second part of the convoy to Bludan was unable to go ahead owing to security concerns on the part of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Of the remaining 10 requests approved in principle, 2 (Irbin and Zamalka) were held up by a lack of agreement between the United Nations, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Government on the access route, given that the route approved by the Government was considered unsafe by the United Nations. Planned convoys to Nubul and Zahra' and Afrin in Aleppo were held up by a lack of approval by non-State armed groups for safe passage. The convoys approved in principle by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Madamiyet, Rif Dimashq, Hula, Homs, and Harbnafsah, Hama, were unable to go ahead owing to the lack of approval by the government security forces. The remaining three requests approved in principle were at various stages of preparation. A total of 45 requests were awaiting government approval: 33 submitted on 1 July and 12 that remained valid. Three requests were put on hold by the United Nations owing to insecurity. The

remaining 13 requests were those that had previously been submitted but were then resubmitted because the original request had either been put on hold by the United Nations owing to insecurity (nine) or gone unanswered by the Government (four).

38. No major changes in the administrative procedures required by the Government for the delivery of humanitarian assistance were reported in July. The current procedures continued to delay or limit the delivery of assistance by United Nations agencies and partners, although UNICEF reported that the average time in obtaining approval to import humanitarian supplies had been reduced from 111 days in 2014 to 20 days in 2015.

39. As at 31 July, 69 United Nations visa requests (requests for new visas and renewals) remained pending: 33 within the limit of 15 working days and 36 exceeding that limit. Three visas were rejected during the reporting period, bringing the total number of visas rejected in 2015 to 36, exclusive of the four United Nations staff who were declared persona non grata in February. By comparison, 28 visa requests were rejected for the whole of 2014.

40. As at 31 July, 15 international non-governmental organizations had been approved by the Government to work in the Syrian Arab Republic. Such organizations continued to face administrative hurdles and restrictions that affected their ability to operate, including with regard to developing partnerships with national organizations, conducting needs assessments and opening sub-offices. Ten requests for international non-governmental organization visas submitted in July were granted, while seven others remained pending approval.

41. A new list of national non-governmental organizations authorized to partner with the United Nations was received on 12 August, increasing the number from 122 to 131 through 216 branches (up from 178 branches).

Besieged areas

42. Besiegement remains a pervasive tactic of war in the Syrian Arab Republic. Of the 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas, 422,000 remained besieged: 167,500 by government forces in eastern Ghutah and Darayya; 26,500 by non-State armed groups in Nubul and Zahra'; and 228,000 people by ISIL in the government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Dayr al-Zawr city.

43. The parties to the conflict continued to heavily restrict access to besieged areas in July. The United Nations and partners reached 1.8 per cent of the besieged population with health assistance. No food or other type of humanitarian relief item reached any besieged area through official routes. The flow of commercial supplies through official routes remained largely blocked, leading to high prices for those commodities reaching besieged areas through unofficial and irregular supply lines, which compounded human suffering. Freedom of movement remained heavily restricted, although certain groups, such as students, civil servants and members of reconciliation councils, were occasionally allowed to leave and return to besieged areas.

44. In eastern Ghutah, some 163,500 people remained besieged by government forces. In July, UNICEF delivered, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, medicines, paediatric kits and nutrition supplements for 5,000 children to Duma for the first time in more than 18 months, although the Government removed antibiotics and anthelmintics needed to treat infections. In addition, WHO delivered

500 treatments for dialysis sessions, 500 treatments for chronic diseases, 20 cholera tests and 7,500 syringes to Duma through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The United Nations Population Fund, through its local partners, also reached Duma with health assistance for 750 people.

45. In Darayya, Rif Dimashq, around 4,000 people remained besieged by government forces. A UNICEF request for a cross-line convoy to provide assistance scheduled for 22 July was not approved by the Syrian authorities. People there have not been assisted by the United Nations since October 2012.

46. In Nubul and Zahra', some 26,500 people remained besieged by non-State armed groups. In July, WHO delivered medicines for 1,112 treatments to Nubul through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

47. In the government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Dayr al-Zawr city, some 228,000 people remained besieged by ISIL. In July, WHO, through its local partners, delivered 845 medical treatments, a wholly insufficient amount given the needs in the area and the irregular frequency of deliveries.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

48. Access to medical supplies and equipment remained restricted to some areas as a result of insecurity and access constraints by parties to the conflict. The security deterioration in many parts of the country limited the availability of life-saving health services, in particular in parts of Aleppo, Dar'a, Hama, Hasakah, Idlib and Rif Dimashq governorates. No surgical items were allowed into areas controlled by non-State armed groups during the reporting period from inside the Syrian Arab Republic, although WHO transported eight surgical kits in a cross-border convoy from Jordan. WHO requests to the Government to send medicines and medical supplies to six locations in Aleppo, Damascus, Idlib and Rif Dimashq governorates remained pending.

49. Attacks on medical facilities, ambulances and medical personnel continued in July. Physicians for Human Rights documented nine attacks on eight medical facilities by government forces using aircraft. Seven attacks used missiles and rockets and two used barrel bombs. Four attacks occurred in Idlib governorate, three in Aleppo governorate and one each in Damascus and Dar'a governorates. Physicians for Human Rights also documented the deaths of 10 medical personnel. Eight were killed by government forces and two by unknown forces. Nine personnel died from shelling and bombing and one was executed. Three deaths occurred each in Dar'a and Idlib governorates and two each in Aleppo and Damascus governorates.

Safety and security of staff and premises

50. On 3 August, a mortar landed on the Sheraton Hotel compound in Damascus, where a number of United Nations staff members reside. The parking area was also hit on 27 July by heavy mortars and rockets, wounding a guard and damaging six United Nations vehicles.

51. On 28 July, a non-governmental organization staff member was killed when two improvised explosive devices detonated in Qamishli city.

52. On 27 July, an explosion in the town of Jamaaya, Hasakah governorate, injured a person working for a UNHCR implementing partner.

53. On 4 July, a UNHCR armoured vehicle was hit by a stray bullet while parked at the Shahba Hotel in Aleppo, with reports of further stray bullets hitting the building. No UNHCR staff members were harmed.

54. A total of 34 United Nations staff members (28 from UNRWA, 3 from UNHCR, 2 from UNICEF and 1 from the United Nations Development Programme) continued to be detained or missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 78: 17 United Nations staff members, 45 Syrian Arab Red Crescent staff members and volunteers, 8 volunteers and staff members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and 8 staff members of international non-governmental organizations. Of the 78, 11 have been killed since 1 January 2015.

III. Observations

55. There is a complete and utter absence of protection for civilians in the Syrian Arab Republic. The parties' total disregard for human life and dignity remains a defining feature of the Syrian conflict and continues on a daily basis with total impunity.

56. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks by all parties to the conflict, including through the use of barrel bombs and other explosive weapons in populated areas, remain by far the primary cause of civilian deaths and injuries. We have again heard of shelling of Damascus by armed groups and appalling reports of new air strikes on the besieged area of Duma. Attacks on civilians must stop. Violations of international humanitarian law by one party to the conflict cannot justify, in any circumstances, retaliation and violations of international humanitarian law by another party. The international community, and in particular the Security Council, must take immediate action to end the daily violations of international law and the killing of civilians.

57. I remain deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on Syrian children and young people. Children continue to be killed, maimed and recruited by parties to the conflict. The school year in the Syrian Arab Republic and in neighbouring countries begins in only a few weeks, yet millions of Syrian children will remain out of school, without access to formal education. Every child in the Syrian Arab Republic today under 5 years of age knows only life in a war zone. With the continued attacks on schools, the lack of employment opportunities and the climate of fear to which young people are subjected, the idea of a lost generation of Syrians is becoming ever more the reality. This will have profound implications for years to come if it is not urgently addressed.

58. All parties to the conflict continue, unjustifiably, to deny access to humanitarian assistance, notwithstanding their obligations to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to all affected people. In particular, I am deeply concerned about the horrific conditions facing the 422,000 civilians who remain besieged. The quantity of assistance reaching the besieged areas is pitiful and wholly insufficient. The parties need to lift the sieges urgently. I also remain deeply concerned about the very limited assistance reaching the 4.6 million people

in hard-to-reach areas. I reiterate that arbitrarily denying humanitarian access and depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival, in addition to water and other essential services, constitute violations of international humanitarian law.

59. It is my hope that the recent visit of the Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Syrian Arab Republic will have helped to resolve some of the significant access challenges that continue to seriously impede humanitarian operations and prevent civilians from receiving life-saving assistance. As needs continue to grow, it is vital that the parties allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to all people in need, wherever they may be located.

60. The Syrian Arab Republic remains the largest humanitarian and peace and security crisis facing the world today. Humanitarian action cannot be a substitute for political action. With more than one quarter of a million people having been killed and in excess of half the Syrian population having been displaced, the crisis represents a profound failure of diplomacy for the international community. The Syrian people deserve an immediate end to the violence and a negotiated political solution to the conflict.

61. I urge all parties to participate constructively in the working groups of the intra-Syrian Arab Republic dialogue process that are to be established by my Special Envoy. The process is intended to further narrow the existing gaps in the interpretation of the key elements of the Geneva communiqué and identify practical steps to implement it.

United Nations S/2015/652

Security Council

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France, Italy, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Recalling all its previous resolutions on Lebanon, in particular resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006), 1701 (2006), 1773 (2007), 1832 (2008), 1884 (2009), 1937 (2010) and 2004 (2011), 2064 (2012), 2115 (2013), and 2172 (2014), as well as the statements of its President on the situation in Lebanon, in particular the statement of its President dated 19 March 2015, and its Press Statement of February 4th 2015,

Responding to the request of the Government of Lebanon to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a period of one year without amendment presented in a letter from the Lebanese Foreign Minister to the Secretary-General of 14 July 2015 and welcoming the letter from the Secretary-General to its President of 5 August July 2015 (S/2015/598) recommending this extension,

Reiterating its strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon,

Reaffirming its commitment to the full implementation of all provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), and aware of its responsibilities to help secure a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution as envisioned in the resolution,

Calling upon all concerned parties to strengthen their efforts to fully implement all provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) without delay,

Expressing deep concern at all violations in connection with resolution 1701 (2006) in particular the serious disruption of the cessation of hostilities that took place on 28 January 2015 (SG letter), and *looking forward* to the rapid finalization of UNIFIL's investigations with a view to preventing such violations in the future,

Underlining the risk that such events could lead to a new conflict that none of the parties or the region can afford,

Urging all parties to make every effort to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is sustained, exercise maximum calm and restraint and refrain from any action or rhetoric that could jeopardize the cessation of hostilities or destabilize the region,

Please recycle

Emphasizing the importance of full compliance with the prohibition on sales and supply of arms and related materiel established by resolution 1701 (2006),

Recalling the utmost importance that all parties concerned respect the Blue line in its entirety, *welcoming* the continued progress in the marking of the Blue line, and *encouraging* the parties to accelerate their efforts in coordination with UNIFIL, including through the tripartite mechanism, to continue working in the ongoing process to delineate and visibly mark the Blue Line in its entirety, as well as to move forward on the marking of its points of contention, as recommended by the Strategic Review,

Condemning in the strongest terms all attempts to threaten the security and stability of Lebanon,

Reaffirming its determination to ensure that no such acts of intimidation prevent UNIFIL from implementing its mandate in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006), and *recalling* the necessity for all parties to ensure that UNIFIL personnel are secure and their freedom of movement is fully respected and unimpeded,

Recalling the relevant principles contained in the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel,

Commending the active role and dedication of the personnel of UNIFIL and *expressing* its strong appreciation to Member States that contribute to UNIFIL and *underlining* the necessity that UNIFIL has at its disposal all necessary means and equipment to carry out its mandate,

Recalling the request from the Government of Lebanon to deploy an international force to assist it to exercise its authority throughout the territory, and *reaffirming* UNIFIL's authority to take all necessary action in areas of operations of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind and to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its mandate,

Welcoming the crucial role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces and security forces in extending and sustaining the authority of the Government of Lebanon, in particular in southern Lebanon, and responding to other security challenges, including the threat of terrorism, and the strong international commitment to support the Lebanese Armed Forces, which has helped strengthen the capability of the Lebanese Armed Forces to provide security for Lebanon,

Welcoming the efforts of the Secretary-General to keep all peacekeeping operations, including UNIFIL, under close review, and ***stressing the need*** for the Council to pursue a rigorous, strategic approach to peacekeeping deployments,

Expressing its full support for the strategic priorities and recommendations identified by the Secretary-General in his letter of 12 March 2012 (S/2012/151) as a result of the Strategic Review of UNIFIL, and ***requesting*** the Secretary-General to continue updating the Council on the implementation of the Strategic Review,

Calling upon Member States to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces as needed to enable it to perform its duties in line with resolution 1701 (2006),

Determining that the situation in Lebanon continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security,

1. *Decides* to extend the present mandate of UNIFIL until 31 August 2016;

2. *Commends* the positive role of UNIFIL, whose deployment together with the Lebanese Armed Forces has helped to establish a new strategic environment in southern Lebanon, *welcomes* the expansion of coordinated activities between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces, and *calls for* further enhancement of this cooperation;

3. *Welcomes* in this regard the continued engagement of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the Strategic Dialogue, which aims at carrying out analysis of ground forces and maritime assets and setting a series of benchmarks reflecting the correlation between the capacities and responsibilities of UNIFIL vis-à-vis those of the Lebanese Armed Forces, with a view to identifying Lebanese Armed Forces requirements for implementing tasks mandated in resolution 1701 (2006);

4. *Urges* in this regard further international support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, in response to the capabilities development plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces, as well as in the framework of the International Support Group for Lebanon, through additional and expedited assistance in areas where the Lebanese Armed Forces are most critically in need of support, including counter-terrorism and border protection;

5. *Strongly calls upon* all parties to respect the cessation of hostilities, to prevent any violation of the Blue Line and to respect it in its entirety and to cooperate fully with the United Nations and UNIFIL;

6. *Welcomes* the constructive role played by the Tripartite Mechanism in facilitating coordination and in de-escalating tensions, which has helped to further stabilize the situation along the Blue Line and build trust between the parties, and *expresses* in this regard strong support for the efforts of UNIFIL to engage with both parties to facilitate liaison, coordination, and practical arrangements on the ground and to continue to ensure that the tripartite mechanism enables the parties to discuss a wider range of issues;

7. *Urges* all parties to abide scrupulously by their obligation to respect the safety of UNIFIL and other United Nations personnel and to ensure that the freedom of movement of UNIFIL is fully respected and unimpeded, in conformity with its mandate and its rules of engagement including by avoiding any course of action which endangers United Nations personnel, and in this regard, *calls* for further cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in particular regarding coordinated and adjacent patrols, *welcomes* the commitment of the Lebanese authorities to protect UNIFIL movements and *reiterates its call* for the rapid finalization of the investigation launched by Lebanon regarding the 27 May, 26 July and 9 December 2011 attacks in order to bring to justice the perpetrators of these attacks;

8. *Urges* all parties to cooperate fully with the Security Council and the Secretary-General to make tangible progress towards a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution as envisioned in resolution 1701 (2006) and on all outstanding issues in the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006), 1680 (2006), and 1559 (2004), and other relevant Security Council resolutions;

9. *Urges* the Government of Israel to expedite the withdrawal of its army from northern Ghajar without further delay in coordination with UNIFIL, which has actively engaged Israel and Lebanon to facilitate such a withdrawal;

10. *Reaffirms* its call on all States to fully support and respect the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL;

11. *Welcomes* the efforts being undertaken by UNIFIL to implement the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure full compliance of its personnel with the United Nations code of conduct, requests the Secretary-General to continue to take all necessary action in this regard and to keep the Security Council informed, and urges troop-contributing countries to take preventive and disciplinary action to ensure that such acts are properly investigated and punished in cases involving their personnel;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Council on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), every four months, or at any time as he deems appropriate;

13. *Stresses* the importance of, and the need to achieve, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all its relevant resolutions including its resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003, and 1850 (2008) of 16 December 2008;

14. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.